

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## Confirming the Third Resurrection

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Dear Brethren:

Once divine revelation is rejected as the basis for understanding Biblical Truth, there is no limit to the doctrinal postulations that will be generated out of self-reliant human minds. From the moment the Worldwide Church of God began to change its doctrinal teachings on the basis of "technical scholarship" in the early 1970s, the doors were thrown wide open for every individual to become a law unto himself, interpreting scripture on the basis of personalized concepts. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong probably never realized that in finally yielding to those clamoring for change of a Monday Pentecost and the sanctity of marriage, that the stage was being set to challenge *every* fundamental teaching of the church. Those original doctrines which he had proclaimed to be the revelation of Jesus Christ—those which painted a beautiful picture of God's plan for the salvation of mankind—became targets, one by one, waiting to be picked off like sitting ducks. Today, hundreds of self-proclaimed Bible students—both those who should know better, as well as those not even old enough to have heard the Truth in those early years—are now writing personal critiques on the original doctrines of the church. In their articles they ridicule those teachings, showing disrespect and disdain for the servant who accomplished one-hundred times more as the servant of God than any of them will ever hope to achieve.

The latest example of such presumptuous vanity is seen in the number of recent writings attempting to dispute Mr. Armstrong's original teaching concerning the resurrections of the dead, and especially what is called the "third resurrection." Does the Bible truly fail to indicate three resurrections as claimed by a number of these new "scholars" today, or is there actual substantiation for the foundation of original church doctrine after all?

## What Were We Taught?

One of the fundamental principles of doctrine from the beginning of the Radio Church of God provided the answer about the "times of salvation." As opposed to the popular

concept that man already possesses an immortal soul, which either goes to heaven, or to a torturous hell fire for all eternity after death, we were taught instead that man is wholly mortal, without inherent life, and that there is no life after death except by the resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, salvation is not afforded to all of humanity at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:23–24). No one can have a personal relationship with Christ and the Father without receiving a specific call, and of the billions who have lived, only a very few are being called out of this world at this time to receive life-saving knowledge. The vast majority of humanity will receive their first opportunity for salvation by means of a resurrection from the dead after the Millennial reign of Christ on this earth has been completed. We were also taught that those who act upon that call, and truly become overcomers—accepting Jesus Christ and His perfect Way of Life—will be born into the family of God, while those who reject that calling will be subject to the second death—permanent destruction, from which there is no further hope of life.

We were also taught that to complete this plan—including more than one time of salvation to rescue the peoples of this world—three distinct resurrections were involved. The first resurrection is to occur at the time of Christ's Second Coming. The second resurrection is to occur after the first one-thousand years of His reign on earth has been accomplished, and a final resurrection is to occur before the ultimate consummation of this physical creation—before the revealing of a new heavens and a new earth. This last resurrection is a resurrection to destruction, for those who are judged unworthy to receive life everlasting and to be sentenced to die the second death. Mr. Armstrong personally referred to this last resurrection as the "final resurrection." But whether one calls it the "final resurrection" or the "third resurrection," being that it is separate and distinct from the first two, by any other name it is indeed a third resurrection. But does the Bible support the notion of three resurrections, or, are those who seek to malign Mr. Armstrong correct in saying the Bible "clearly" contradicts this doctrine?

### **Claims of the Naysayers**

The most radical group of dissenters are those who have embraced the concept of universal salvation. These claim that no human being will truly be lost to the second death, otherwise God Himself would be the failure. They rationalize away the strong warnings and condemnation Jesus Christ gave concerning the incorrigible in the coming judgment. The second group includes those claiming the Bible teaches—plainly and simply—two resurrections only. Even though they do not deny the eventual destruction of the wicked in a lake of fire, they emphasize the Bible nowhere pinpoints three separate resurrections specifically, and thereby interpret Revelation, chapter twenty, John, chapter five, and other Scriptures to support their *claim* of a simple and indisputable alternative. Yes, it is true that one cannot turn to a specific passage in the Bible containing the phrase "third—or final—resurrection." But does this mean that which Mr. Armstrong taught on the topic is

truly inconsistent with Scripture, or is it still possible to substantiate the original teaching we received from the beginning? We shall see.

## **How Many Classifications?**

Before evaluating the specific number of resurrections, let us begin by identifying how many unique classifications of human beings we are dealing with in God's master plan. The number of resurrections required in God's perfect plan must relate in some way to the number of distinct groups God is working with on this earth. The fact that all human beings are not to be part of a single resurrection must be for a legitimate reason.

First, the Bible reveals two broad classifications of people to be involved in resurrections—the just and the unjust. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:14–15). Some attempt to pigeonhole these two broad groups—the just and the unjust—into one of two specific resurrections. But the inspired intent here is not necessarily to address specifics, but only to demonstrate God's general distinction between two broad groups of human beings within His plan, both of which will come up in one of the resurrections, however many that may be. But how is humanity more specifically differentiated by God? One distinction is a classification by the specific times in which He chooses to deal with them. In this regard, we might say there are four unique groups of people, based upon the timing of their calling to a knowledge of the Truth.

## **The Firstfruits**

The first group includes those called out of this present world and given the opportunity to be part of the firstfruits harvest of God's Family. This group includes a very small percentage of the billions who have lived during the past six thousand years, or are living on this earth today. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). Those set apart by a calling in this life, and given access to the Holy Spirit through the process of conversion, come out of this world and devote themselves to training for offices within God's Family government at Christ's return.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of [sonship], whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:14–17).

This group includes all of those called into the church, beginning from the first century through the present, as well as the faithful patriarchs who are promised their reward. And what is the promise given to these firstfruits, who accept their calling, apply themselves to overcoming, and faithfully manifest the very nature of Jesus Christ in their lives until His return?

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. . . . These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb (Revelation 14:1, 4).

### **Those in the Millennium**

The next to be called to a knowledge of the Truth will be those who will live through the terrible plagues of the last days and survive the wrath of the Lamb and the final battle of Armageddon—when Jesus Christ will forcibly take possession of His throne on this earth. Those who survive this unprecedented time in human history will have their minds opened to the Truth and become the initial flesh and blood subjects in the Millennial realm of Christ's new government.

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. . . . The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries (Psalms 110:2, 4–6).

And it shall come to pass, that *every one that is left of all the nations* which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16) [emphasis ours].

These human beings will produce children who will grow up having known no other world but the one under benevolent dominion of God's righteous laws (Isaiah 11:6–10). All of these generations throughout the thousand years of the Millennium will have access to Truth, and their opportunity to qualify for eternal life.

For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left (Isaiah 30:19–21).

### **Those Who Died Without Saving Knowledge**

The third and largest unique classification of human beings includes those who lived and died in this world from the beginning, never having received the revelation of Truth, or an opportunity to know the real Jesus Christ. These are certainly distinct from the firstfruits, or those who received saving knowledge by living into, or by being born during the Millennium. Ezekiel, chapter thirty-seven, describes a resurrection of someone again to flesh and blood—not to eternal life—who receive for the first time the opportunity to have God's Holy Spirit.

Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. . . . So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD (Ezekiel 37:4–6, 10–14).

This group includes the billions of people who have written lessons over six thousand years of the failure of man's way of thinking under the influence of Satan, the Devil. They are the ones who have paid the penalties for separation from God and the result of living after the deception of carnal human nature—the misery and heartache recorded in the annals of human history. But these also are loved of God and will be given an opportunity for conversion and eternal life in their own appointed time.

## What About the Incurrigible?

The fourth group, which is totally unique from any other, includes those who were given a calling by God in this life, but who ultimately rejected Christ before they died. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit], And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4–6). God does not allow us to make judgements about who falls within this category, seeing that God is the only one who can read hearts and minds. But in spite of what the proponents of "universal salvation" claim, there *will* be those classified as incurrigible, who will not receive eternal life.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God *shall take away his part out of the book of life*, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18–19) [emphasis ours].

Those God has called begin with their names written in the Book of Life (Revelation 17:8). This shows us God begins by assuming that once called we will each succeed. However, if we ultimately reject the truth that Christ embodies in favor of our own concepts, He will remove our name from that Book. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5). Conversely, what will happen to those who prove they have no love for the revealed way of God? "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14–15). This is not an empty threat. Someone who was called, but who did not love the Truth, will be subject to a second death.

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts (Malachi 4:1–3).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

All men are appointed once to die (Hebrews 9:27), but it is those who commit the unpardonable sin in rejecting Christ that must also die a second death. This must mean therefore that those who died as incorrigibles, must yet be resurrected at some time. Else, how are they to die a second death? If God merely leaves them in the grave from their first death, then there cannot really be the penalty of a second death. Furthermore, those who have died or will die in that state have never been sentenced. They died thinking they were right in the eyes of God. Yet Christ said, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). Unless they are resurrected to face that final condemnation, there will be no closure of justice in God's plan.

The question now is ready to be asked: When and how does God complete His master plan involving these four very unique classifications of human beings—the firstfruits, those living into and/or born in the Millennium, those who died without saving knowledge, and the incorrigible who *were* called, but rejected God? It is understanding the order and timing of various resurrections that provides the answer to this important question.

## **The First Resurrection**

Among those who still accept certain basic teachings of the early church, the role of the firstfruits in the first resurrection is generally accepted without debate, seeing that the Bible provides more details about this resurrection than any other.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. . . . Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:20–23, 51–52).

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in

the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17).

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. . . . This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6).

These texts show plainly that those called out of this world now—the firstfruits—who receive the revelation of Jesus Christ as a pearl of great price, will be given eternal life at the moment Jesus Christ descends to take possession of His throne, and they will assume offices in that glorious Kingdom.

The Bible does not provide details about the way eternal life will be given to those living into and born during the Millennium, even though it is certain God has a plan for them. It could be that after living out the appointed lifetime in the flesh, those judged worthy by the fruits of their lives will be made immortal and added to the family of God at the moment of death, but that or any other hypothesis can only be speculation. We do not intend to assume anything God has not revealed.

## **The Second Resurrection**

Revelation, chapter twenty, next provides more detail concerning those multitudes from Ezekiel, chapter thirty-seven, that we read about—who will be resurrected with new flesh and blood bodies, to receive their first opportunity of salvation.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. . . . And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:5, 11–12).

So after the thousand year reign of Christ in the Millennium, a second resurrection takes place. The books are opened, meaning the books of the Bible are finally opened to the comprehension of this great multitude, where before they were closed by God to their

understanding. For the first time, these masses who have lived and died through all the generations of men on this earth—who were previously separated from God—will finally have their first opportunity for spiritual conversion. The Book of Life is also opened to them at this time, showing that they are all given an opportunity to embrace the Truth, and inherit eternal life.

But notice, the last part of verse twelve says, "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*." This means each one will have to prove that he loves God's Way more than anything else, just as the firstfruits had to prove their love for the Truth. Therefore, can this White Throne Judgment be fulfilled in a single day, as in the world's concept of judgment day? If all of these billions have just been resurrected, and for the first time have had their minds opened to the Truth, with the first chance to receive the Holy Spirit, how long will it take for each one to manifest fruits? Was judgment for the firstfruits in a single day, or did that judgment cover the total length of time we lived in the flesh after conversion? "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). What we find is that judgment of the firstfruits is a *period of time*, even that period we are all experiencing this very minute! We are daily manifesting our true character, and showing God what we love most. When Christ returns, there will be no protracted judgment for each of us. We already read in First Thessalonians four that the firstfruits are changed in a twinkling of an eye and rise to meet Christ in the clouds at the last trump. Therefore, the judgment has already been completed before that moment, and all that is left for that Righteous Judge to do is announce the *verdict*.

Comparatively, at the moment of the second resurrection, are all of those billions of people ready to receive a verdict? Hardly! Having just received the Truth, and access to the Holy Spirit, it will take time for their fruits to be manifested, either as good or as bad. That is why we should recognize that it is the White Throne Judgment *period*, not the White Throne Judgment *day*. This distinction will become critical very soon in our understanding of God's plan. How long is that judgment period? No one can say for sure. Isaiah 65:20–22 was introduced years ago by one evangelist to conclude it would be a one-hundred year period. Perhaps, but it is most important to recognize that, no matter how many years specifically, it will be a period sufficient for God to prove the real character of each individual before making a verdict for or against eternal salvation.

## **The Final Resurrection**

We still have not tied up all the loose ends in God's plan. Remember, there is still one more group of people we have not addressed to a conclusion—the incorrigible. As we have already seen, there will be some who fall into this category—those who were called to a knowledge of the Truth, but ultimately died in defiance of that Way. Their end will include

a verdict by the Righteous Judge, and the carrying out of that guilty verdict by their experiencing the second death. The only question is, when are these incorrigible ones resurrected? The original teaching of the church was that Revelation 20:13–15 referred specifically to a separate and distinct resurrection, even though it is not labeled directly as such:

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:13–14).

The naysayers claim these verses are not referring to a unique resurrection, but is merely a parenthetical expression further describing the second resurrection. We are even told by one author it is "clearly not talking about another resurrection." Is that a true statement? Actually, it is anything but clear. It is true we cannot certify from the Greek that a separate resurrection is specifically implied here, but neither is there any evidence that certifies this is not exactly what God was inspiring.

Those who contend with Mr. Armstrong claim the Bible is very clear that there are only two resurrections. Yet they fail to effectively address this classification of people whose end must be accounted for *somewhere* in the plan. It is very easy to say there are only two resurrections, but none of these authors have carried out their logic and answered the question, "Then how do the incorrigible die the second death?" The only possible assertion they can make is that they are part of the second resurrection. Yet, does that even make good sense? We have already shown that the incorrigible are totally unique, and distinct from the billions who died without saving knowledge. One group will only be beginning their journey of spiritual conversion at resurrection, while the other has already had their chance, failed, and merely awaits assignment of the death penalty. These two groups therefore have nothing in common! One group is ready for verdict, and the other is not. Does it therefore make sense that God would bring them up together? One could argue that at the second resurrection, God intends to cast the incorrigible into the lake of fire immediately, and then begin the conversion process with all of the rest. Or perhaps they believe the incorrigible are resurrected and then hang in a state of limbo for up to one hundred years, waiting for the time when all of the rebellious have been identified, and then sentenced together. But we have not even seen that extent of logic from these theorists.

### **"Proof" of the Naysayers**

Those believing in only two resurrections have claimed this is the "clear" teaching of the Bible. What is their evidence? First, one author claims Revelation 20:12 does not say that only *some* of the dead were resurrected (which must be true if the incorrigible are still

held in the grave till a later time). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; . . ." (Revelation 20:12). He claims that since it says "the dead," and not "some of the dead," it must by default mean "all of the dead." He claims that for Mr. Armstrong to have presumed it meant all of the dead save the incorrigible, is speculation, yet does not seem to recognize that his assertion that it means "all of the dead" is just as much a presumption. The text says "the dead." It denotes neither "some" or "all" necessarily. But what is God's intent? From the Greek we cannot conclude one way or the other. Of its own, "the dead" could be a reference to the particular classification of people who died without saving knowledge (which does not include the incorrigible), or it could be intended to encompass all those dead not previously resurrected. But to say the Bible is *clear* on this point is simply false.

The next evidence given for the "clear" teaching of the Bible relates to an interpretation of John 5:29. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28–29). The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 39, published in 1965, summarizes the original teaching of the church concerning a third resurrection. It states that the "resurrection of damnation" in John 5:29 is a direct reference to the third resurrection. The scoffers counter with a debate about the Greek word translated as "damnation."

The Greek word is *krisis*. We are told that *krisis* does not really mean damnation, or condemnation, but simply judgment. We are referred to Matthew 12:41–42 to prove that the proper context is not one of a guilty verdict, but a judgment which might have either a positive or a negative outcome. With this we are asked to conclude that John 5:29 must also be referring to a resurrection of judgment—the second resurrection—which can have either a positive or negative outcome for each individual. But is this conclusion really so simple and straight forward?

It is true that *krisis* can refer to a general judgment, without predisposition to either a positive or negative verdict, but what we were not told is that *krisis* (from Strong's Greek Dictionary) in certain cases *does mean* condemnation or damnation. Notice these examples:

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy [Spirit] hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation [*krisis*]: (Mark 3:29).

Is someone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit in danger of being on trial for eternity? Or is this instance of *krisis* a direct reference to a guilty verdict?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [*krisis*]; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

Are the faithful not to be judged at all? Or is this use of *krisis* certifying that a true believer will not face a guilty verdict?

Seeing then that *krisis*, depending upon its context, can refer either to a general judgment or to specific condemnation and damnation, what clear and simple proof does one have for interpreting John 5:29 specifically as the second resurrection, and not the third? There is none! It is pure speculation by those who begin with their own hypothesis, and then try to force Biblical evidence to support it. The truth is, we cannot prove from the Greek which interpretation is appropriate. Actually, it could be a text similar to Acts 24:15, which merely refers to that general classification of two broad groups, the just and the unjust, which we noted earlier. So does John 5:29 provide clear evidence there are only two resurrections? Hardly! But, notice one Scripture the doubters fail to address:

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt [*deraown*] (Daniel 12:2).

Unlike the Greek word *krisis*, the Hebrew word for contempt, *deraown*, does not have multiple meanings. It means specifically an object of aversion:—abhorring, contempt. What does this tell us? Daniel has recorded, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that there are some who will awake in a resurrection to *contempt*! Their final sentence must be carried out to complete the plan of God. Is this a direct parallel to John 5:29? We still cannot say for sure. But anyone claiming they can prove a simple and clear alternative to what Mr. Armstrong originally gave is not being honest.

An analysis of Jesus Christ's parable of Lazarus and the rich man, found in Luke 16:19–31, certainly confirms the intent of God to resurrect someone to face the consequences of his rebellion, and to endure the second death in the lake of fire. It is the concept of universal salvation which is clearly contrary to Biblical teaching.

### **Why Do They Contend?**

What is the one thing we can conclude from the debate about a third resurrection? Those who argue there are only two resurrections are those who also hold Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in contempt. They are ones who do not believe Jesus Christ used him to reveal His true Way of Life to the last day church. Although they are content to accept certain pieces of that original teaching, they reserve to themselves the right to pick and choose what they will believe and what they will not. They do not believe Jesus Christ Himself was the Revelator. Yet recognizing the one through whom Christ *did* manifest Himself and is *now* manifesting Himself is a requirement of the faithful.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:2–3).

Those contending about the third resurrection do so because it is an easier mark to discredit than other doctrines which have more substantial evidence. But even though it is true a third resurrection cannot be as easily proven from Scripture as other original teachings of the church (like the Sabbath and Holy Days) we have also demonstrated that this teaching is not contrary in any way to what the Bible "clearly" teaches. In fact, a separate and final resurrection helps explain more fully how God's plan will be completed.

So without meaty technical evidence one way or the other, who are we going to believe? The self-proclaimed scholars who take licence with Scripture to support their own concepts, while refuting the role of divine revelation as the basis for church doctrine, or the servant through whom we all came to understand the plan of God for the salvation of mankind? No one else understood what man's true hope in God's master plan was all about. Mr. Armstrong came to understand it, not because of his superior technical knowledge, but because God chose to reveal it through him. Our responsibility as members of that Body Christ raised up is to hold fast to that which Christ gave through His chosen servant. "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:14–15).

The teaching of a final resurrection was part of that which we heard from the beginning. May each of you remain steadfast in love of the revelation of Jesus Christ, and hold to those teachings which were blessed by God from the inception of the last day church.

Yours faithfully in Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby



Raymond C. Cole